Select Miscellany.

SCIONS OF GREAT MEN.

Were a star quenched on high
For ages would its light,
Still traveling downward to the sky,
Shine on our mortal sight.

So when a great man dies,
For years beyond our ken
The light he leaves behind him lies
Upon the paths of men. —*Longfellow.*

Doctor Stolberg's Patience.

"I cannot think it right, Margaret, for you thus to encourage Dr. Stolberg, unless you intend to marry him."

"I do not encourage him, aunty. Were you to call Dr. Stolberg himself as a witness, he would tell you that he knows my feelings towards him to be simply friendship."

"But Dr. Stolberg believes that your friendship will ripen into something warmer and deeper."

"I cannot help his beliefs. I cannot refuse to marry him before he asks me."

Miss Sabine sighed.

"I beg you do not look so melancholy, aunty," laughed Margaret. "I could not help being born without that valuable appendage, a heart."

"Truly, aunty," she continued, after a pause, during which time Miss Sabine sat soberly knitting, "I do not wish to bring any pain to Dr. Stolberg, but what can I do?"

Miss Sabine made no reply.

"If you are so anxious about him, aunty, why do you not warn him yourself? There! he is coming in the gate this moment. Now is your opportunity," and Margaret ran out of the room.

"I will do it," said Miss Sabine, shutting her teeth together. "I shall have no thanks for my pains, but I shall feel that I have cleared *my* skirts."

"Good morning, Miss Horton," said Dr. Stolberg, taking the seat to which Miss Sabine motioned him. "Is Miss Margaret at home?"

"She is up-stairs; but before I call her," said aunt Sabine, who never wasted time in discharging a disagreeable duty, "I want to say a few words to you."

"You are not sick, Miss Horton?" asked the doctor, who fancied his professional services were wanted.

"Oh, no! *I* am well enough. It's about yourself I want to speak."

The doctor's face took on an expression of amazement, which deepened as Miss Sabine went on.

"I can't help seeing, Dr. Stolberg, that you are falling in love with Margaret. It will not do you any good. I have lived with Margaret all her life; have seen her through innumerable love affairs—love affairs at east, so far as the other party was concerned. As for Margaret, I do not believe she is capable of loving any man well enough to marry him. She says that she has no heart, and I begin to believe her. She is a dear, good girl, warm-hearted to her friends, but to the man that would make her his wife she is colder than ice. I like you, Dr. Stolberg, and I cannot see you walk unwarned into certain sorrow."

"I am a man," said the doctor, "almost thirty-five years old. I ought to be able to take care of my own heart."

"You are angry, Dr. Stolberg, just as I expected that you would be. Well, I have done the best that I could for you."

"I am not angry," said the doctor, but the flash in his eyes contradicted his words. "I appreciate your motive, I thank you."

He said no more, and there was an awkward pause.

"I will speak to Margaret," said Miss Sabine, gathering up her work. "He is just like the rest," she muttered as she climbed the stairs. "Mighty independent beforehand, but ready enough to come to me for sympathy after it is too late."

When Margaret entered the parlor Dr. Stolberg was at the piano.

"I have brought a new duet," he said, after responding to her greeting. "Are you at liberty to try it?"

Margaret assented. They had played the duet through several times, when the doctor, suddenly wheeling on his stool so as to look straight into Margaret's face, said:

"Your aunty warned me this morning not to fall in love with you. Did you tell her to?"

Margaret's face crimsoned, but her eyes met the doctor's fearlessly.

"Yes and no. Aunty was upbraiding me for trifling with your love, and I told her if she was so troubled she might tell you that I could never love you."

"Have I ever asked you to love me?" said Dr. Stolberg, coolly.

"No," replied Margaret, quite as coolly, though her cheeks tingled with anger.

"On the last page," said the doctor, wheeling around to the key-board, "our time was incorrect. Suppose we try that page again?"

"Well, Aunt Sabine, I hope you are satisfied," said Margaret, as her aunt came into the room after the doctor's departure.

"All the thanks Dr. Stolberg gave me for the attempt to save his feelings was a cool 'Have I ever asked you to love me?' Men are the most unreasonable creatures. If you reject them, they reproach you for having encouraged them. If you try to warn them beforehand, they stand on their dignity and insinuate that you are refusing before you are asked. They are a thankless ungrateful set, any way."

"You seem to like them pretty well," said aunt Sabine, dryly. Spite of her vexation Margaret laughed.

"To tell the truth, aunty, I am provoked. I expected better things of Dr. Stolberg."

"I did not," said aunt Sabine, philosophically. "All men are alike when you touch their pride."

Margaret Winston had been an heiress as well as a beauty. Black Friday had swept away her wealth, leaving her only her greater dower, beauty. Gathering the remnants of her fortune, she had removed with her only living relative, aunty Sabine, from her city home to the little village of Wilton.

"It is not so far but that I can go in when there is a good concert, and the cost of living will be far less," was the thought by which she stilled her regrets at leaving the city.

Margaret had not been long in Wilton before she met Dr. Holman Stolberg. While yet in her teens she had spent a year in Germany, and Dr. Stolberg, though proud of his citizenship in the United States, loved to talk of his fatherland. Acquaintance revealed many mutual tastes.

Dr. Stolberg became a frequent visitor at Margaret's cottage. Intimacy ripened into friendship, and then on the doctor's part into love. He had never spoken this love; there was no need—when with Margaret every look and tone revealed it.

Margaret was not a flirt. She had too much intellect, too much principle. She belonged to that more dangerous class—unconscious coquettes. There are women who can no more help charming the men whom they meet than a bird can help singing in the sunshine.

"What a lovely afternoon," cried Margaret, as she sat by the window after dinner. "I believe I will go out and gather some autumn leaves for winter bouquets. A walk will do me good. I have not been out of the house for two days."

Margaret made herself ready, and was just going out of the door when Dr. Stolberg drove up.

"Miss Margaret," he said, "I heard you express a wish for some autumn leaves. There are some brilliantly colored ones on the clump of trees just this side of the red school-house. May I have the pleasure of taking you there?"

Margaret had resolved to be on her dignity when the doctor called again, but the prospect of a ride on this sunny October day made her forget her vexation.

Dr. Stolberg was unusually silent during the drive to the school-house; but Margaret was so absorbed in the beauties of earth and sky that she did not notice.

When they reached the clump of trees, the doctor helped her out, and then turned his horse so that it could feed on the crisp, green grass that grew along the roadside.

Margaret was standing on tiptoe, trying to reach a branch of scarlet leaves which hung just above her head. He broke off the branch, but instead of handing it to her said:

"It was not simply that you wanted leaves that I asked you to come here. I have a confession to make. I was unjust, brutal to you this morning. I would not believe that I could so dishonor my manhood; but I am proud and you touched my pride. I love you, Margaret—love you so that the day which passes without a word or a look from you is a lost day to me. I have not asked your love, because I know that you could not give it now. Can you forgive my words this morning?"

He looked so strong and brave as he stood with the maple branch making a crown over his head, that Margaret felt for an instant an almost irresistible impulse to cry out, "I will love you," and fall into the arms that would open so gladly to receive her; but the feeling was gone before she spoke.

"Just because I believe your love to be strong and pure am I grieved that you have given it to me, for I have only friendship to give in return."

"I know that you have only friendship to give *now*."

"And shall have only friendship in the future."

"We shall see," said the doctor, simply.

"Do you not see, Dr. Stolberg," said Margaret, her eyes filling with tears, "that you are feeding your love on hopes which I ought, which I must, destroy? I know myself much better than you can know me"—she hesitated, then with a blushing face went on. "I am twenty-five years old, and you are not my first lover. Men have offered me love who could give me wealth and position."

"And I can give neither," interrupted the doctor.

"I honored them as men," continued Margaret, not heeding the interruption, "loved as friends, but when they spoke of marriage I felt frozen. If they persisted, I felt a strange repugnance, which destroyed the friendship I had until then felt."

"I will not talk of love. I will not ask you to marry me."

"Will you promise here that you will give up all hopes of winning my love; that you will try and content yourself with friendship?"

Dr. Stolberg was silent.

"I knew you would not. You are all the time deceiving yourself with the hope that some time I will love you. Dr. Stolberg, will you not believe me when I say that I can never love you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because you cannot know what you will do in the future."

"Have I not told you that I am no child speaking without experience?" said Margaret, angrily. "Other men have offered me a love true and pure as yours."

"Atalanta was fleet-footed and many lovers lost their lives, but at last Hippomenes came and gained the race. The Ida of your English Tennyson turned away from love and marriage, yet the time came when the prince won his princess."

Margaret opened her lips to reply, but what could she say? She resorted to an essentially feminine weapon. She sat down on a stone and cried, partially from vexation, partly from other feelings which she could not have analyzed.

The doctor made no attempt to comfort her. He stood leaning against a tree until she arose. Dashing the tears from her eyes with an impatient movement of her hands, she said:

"I want to go home."

"As we came for leaves, it might be better to gather some," suggested the doctor.

Margaret began picking leaves with little regard for their claim to beauty.

Dr. Stolberg brought up the horse; as he took Margaret's hand to help her to her seat, he said:

"I know that I have vexed you, but I cannot help it. I will make no promise that I cannot keep. I shall try in every way to win the greatest good earth can give me—your love. The Holy Book tells us that when Jacob served seven years for Rachel, they seemed to him but a few days for the love he bore her. I can wait as long as Jacob, Margaret."

"But, Dr. Stolberg, it is not just to you."

"Can you not trust me to take care for myself?" he interrupted, with a tone of the old pride.

Margaret hesitated, then putting both hands into the doctor's broad palms, and looking straight into his eyes, said:

"Dr. Stolberg, I give you no hopes of ever winning my love, but how and when we shall meet in the future I leave to your own judgment."

"Thank you," said the doctor, holding her hand in his strong, firm grasp. He bent over and impressed just one kiss on her forehead."

"Goodness!" commented aunt Sabine, after Margaret had returned and laid her leaves upon the table. "Did you go clear to the red school-house for those leaves? I could pick up prettier ones in the door-yard any day."

Golden October changed to sad November, winter, spring, summer passed, and still Dr. Stolberg came and went as of old.

"Why in the world don't Dr. Stolberg marry that girl, if he's a-goin' to?" commented the village gossips.

The doctor spoke no more of love. He brought new books, new music, fruits and flowers, he practiced, read and sang, until Margaret, in the present pleasure, forgot possible pain in the future.

Sometimes when she remembered his earnest "My love must soon or late compel yours," she would try and look into her own heart and see if it were still untouched.

"It is a very close, unusual friendship," she would say. "Still, it is only friendship."

Aunt Sabine was not so certain. She wondered if it were not some feeling warmer than friendship which made Margaret so impatient if the doctor did not come at his usual time. So "out of sorts" if anything kept him away for a day or two, which made the color rush to her cheeks at the sound of his well-known ring. But Dr. Stolberg grew daily in aunt Sabine's good graces, so she watched and waited in silence.

If the doctor had any suspicion that the little blind god had crept into the beautiful temple which Margaret had raised to friendship, he also was wise enough to be silent.

One night as Dr. Stolberg was seated at Margaret's piano, there broke in upon the music that cry so terrifying to a villager, "Fire! Fire!"

As the doctor and Margaret listened, they heard in a moment the rumbling of the engines, the jangling of bells, the commands of the engineer thundered through his trumpets, the "Aye, aye, sir!" of the men mingled with the cries of the crowd hastening by the house.

"Where is the fire?" shouted the doctor from the window.

"The asylum!" came back in half a dozen voices from the street.

"O God!" cried Doctor Stolberg. "We *must* save the children!" And waiting not to snatch his hat from the rack he rushed into the street.

A branch from the orphan asylum in the neighboring city had been established at Wilton. Just now the building was crowded to its utmost capacity by children who had been sent to spend the summer in the country.

City people wait for the fire to come to them, village people go to the fire.

Aunt Sabine waited only to get the jar of lime water and oil which she always kept ready for burns. Then Margaret and she joined the crowd that was still hurrying by the house.

Reaching the fire, they found a scene of the wildest confusion. Women with shawls over their heads, children who ought to have been in bed, men who were of no more service than children, were running against each other crying and wringing their hands.

"Take this!" shouted a man, thrusting the headboard of a bedstead into aunt Sabine's hands.

Aunt Sabine took it meekly, and having confided the jar of lime water to Margaret, started off tugging the headboard.

"You take this," cried a second man, handing Margaret an pan of rusty nails.

Margaret, bewildered by the confusion, was about to follow aunt Sabine's example, when Dr. Stolberg came hurrying along with a child in each arm; recognizing Margaret he said:

"Put that worthless thing down, and take these children to a place of safety. What is in that jar?"

"Lime water and sweet oil."

"Take it along; some of the children are badly burned; that largest child can walk."

Margaret marshalled her charges through the crowd to a house on the other side of the road, then went back to see what else she could do.

Spite of the misery the fire was causing, Margaret could not help stopping for an instant to gaze at the splendid spectacle. The main building of the asylum was stone, flanked on each side by a wing of wood; at the end of the left wing, and connected with it, was a small brick building. The right wing had caught fire first, and was entirely consumed. Where it had stood was a gleaming wall of coals. The floors and wooden parts of the stone building were going fast. Ever and anon a long tongue of greedy flame would thrust itself out the empty window places, as if seeking something more to devour.

The sight that stopped Margaret was the falling of the main roof.

There was a carnival of fire. From every window burst forth masses of red-black flame. As Margaret gazed, there arose above the crackling of timber and the hoarse cries of the firemen a clear, piercing shriek, joined, before it died away, by a cry which, once heard, can never be forgot. The horror cry of a great multitude.

Turning with those near her, Margaret saw, standing in a window of the burning left wing, a little child. It stood with arms stretched appealingly toward the crowd, which was powerless to help.

"A ladder! a ladder! in God's name a ladder," cried a voice which Margaret recognized as Dr. Stolberg's.

A ladder was brought and placed at the window; a thousand anxious eyes watched the doctor as he ran rapidly up. There was not a moment to lose, for already the child was wrapped in smoke. The doctor had taken the child in his arms, when a second cry arose from the excited people, as ladder and building fell together in a seething sea of fire.

With that cry in her ears, Margaret fell in a faint. When she came back to consciousness two women were standing near her talking of the scene just described.

"Horrible! Burned to death in an instant; such a noble young man as that Dr. Stolberg was! Strange that it is always men like him who are taken, men who are needed in the world."

Margaret waited to hear no more, but hastened homeward as fast as her trembling limbs would bear her. Down by the piano, where less than an hour before they had sat together, she fell upon her knees.

The veil which hung before her heart had been burned away. She knew now that she loved Dr. Stolberg with the one love of her life.

"O God!" she moaned. "This is too bitter, too bitter; why need I know this love of mine, when the knowledge of it can bring only sorrow? O Herman, my noble brave Herman: come back, if only for a moment, that I may tell you I love you with a love as great as your own. O God, let me die! I cannot, cannot live."

But death does not come at our call, and after a time the violence of her grief spent itself. Still she kept repeating the weary moan:

"Come back, if only for a moment, that I may tell you of my love."

Suddenly she heard the click of the gate, and a quick step up the walk.

"It is aunt Sabine come to tell me. I cannot, I cannot endure it."

With a vague feeling that she would hide herself away, Margaret started for the stairs.

As she opened the door she saw Dr. Stolberg standing in the hall. Margaret was not startled. To her overstrained mind all was clear. Dr. Stolberg was dead, but God had heard her prayer and sent back to earth his spirit.

"O Herman!" she cried. "God has sent you back to hear it. I love you, I love you!" And Margaret sank faint into the arms of a very substantial ghost.

Possibly it was well for Dr. Stolberg that he was forced just then to forget the lover in the physician. He laid Margaret upon the sofa, and applied restoratives. When the white eyelids began to quiver, he seated himself at the piano and played softly a strain from the song he was rendering when the alarm was given.

To the bewildered Margaret, slowly coming back to consciousness, the last hour seemed a horrible dream. Was not the doctor burned to death? Yet there he sat, calmly playing.

"What does it mean?" she cried, rubbing her forehead. "Has there not been a fire? Were you not burned to death?"

"If I were," said the doctor, seating himself by her side, "I have come back to life in remarkably good shape."

"But you were burned, for your beard is nearly burned off."

The doctor put up his hand to feel for his beard. Like a flash it came back to Margaret, the fire, her agony, her confession; she covered her burning face with her hands.

The hands were taken away and the face lifted, so that Margaret's eyes looked into the joy-beaming eyes of the doctor.

"Atalanta is won at last," he whispered. "O Gretchen! you cannot think how hard it has been for me to keep silent all this year."

For a moment they were silent with the blessedness of loving and being loved. Then, as the past began more and more to intrude itself on the present, Margaret asked:

"Did you not go up a ladder to save a child, and fall with the ladder into the fire?"

"If I had, I should hardly have been here now. I had just taken the child when the building began to go, but I heard the crack and sprang from the ladder, and caught in a near window ledge in that little brick building. There I hung till they brought a ladder and helped me down."

"But I heard two women say that you were burned to death!" said Margaret, with a shudder.

"Everybody supposed I was; indeed, I did not myself know but that I should be, for the smoke was so thick, and the noise made by the fire so great, that I could neither make myself seen nor heard. Just when I felt that I could hang on no longer, I heard a shout, and knew that I was discovered. My left shoulder is strained, and my left hand will be rather a useless member for a time. As I held the child in my right arm I was forced to hang my whole weight on my left."

Margaret seized the wounded member, and, regardless of cuts and soot, covered it with kisses.

"I must not," cried Dr. Stolberg, suddenly, "forget, in my own happiness, the sorrows of those around me; there are suffering little ones who need me."

"I will go with you."

"Not to-night, you have already gone through too much for your strength. You belong to me now, and I shall take good care of you."

"Yes, to-night," pleaded Margaret. "I feel as if I had found a great treasure, and could not trust it from my sight for a moment."

Dr. Stolberg could not resist this plea. As he fastened Margaret's shawl he caught her in his arms, saying, "At last I have won the woman to whom I can speak as did the prince to his princess—

"'My wife, my life, O may we walk this world
Yoked in an exercise of noble end,
And so through those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows.'"

—*E. L. Beckwith, in Christian at Work.*